

# £700 A TICKET TO PRO-GIPSY JOLLY

## ..and it's taxpayers who foot the bill

■ by EMILY HALL  
A GOVERNMENT-backed conference to start youth clubs for gypsies has been slammed as a waste of taxpayers' cash.

The seminar will also teach council penpushers how to help travellers find a doctor, build camps and get jobs.

Speakers at the one-day jolly, Delivering Services for Gypsies and Travellers, will tackle "discrimination" and even give advice on the best way to set up youth clubs.

But it will cost delegates £700 each, which will be funded by the taxpayer.

Flyers for the event, which is backed by the Department for Communities and Local Government, say organisers are "celebrating culture, supporting independence and moving beyond past injustice".

But some say the conference at the Kingsway Hall Hotel, west London, is beyond a joke.

### Queue

Yesterday Shadow Local Government Minister Bob Neill blasted the seminar.

The Tory MP said: "This traveller summit exposes how Labour ministers are obsessed with giving special treatment to travellers to build on the Green Belt, jump to the front of the queue in public services and ignore planning rules."

"Law-abiding homeowners, who have faced massive hikes in council tax and stamp duty, will be angry that their taxpayers' money is bankrolling events like this."

And Matthew Elliott of the Taxpayers' Alliance blasted: "This is an outrageous amount to spend on any conference for public servants, let alone one about how best to provide for gipsy and traveller sites."

"The priority for most taxpayers is enforcing planning law to keep the sites under control."

Organisers Neil Stewart Associates provide 200 "public policy" events a year, including events for charities and the NHS.

A spokesman refused to confirm how many will be attending, but added: "This event is for councillors and local government workers."

"If those who attend are from the public sector the cash comes from their budgets so the taxpayer does pay."

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BREAK-UP:  
Christopher  
with his wife Jill,  
and, inset, TV  
show judge Karen



## SKATER DEAN SPLITS

ICE skating champion Christopher Dean has split from his wife – and been spending nights with Karen Barber – a judge on his Dancing On Ice TV show.

Dean and his former US skater wife Jill Trenary, 41, who have two sons, confirmed they had split after 16 years of marriage.

■ by ROSS KANIUK

Last week Dean, 51, was with married former Olympic skater Karen, 40, at his luxury flat for five nights.

Her husband Stephen Pickavance is a trainer on ITV1's ice dance series.

Dean, who with Jayne Torvill, 52, won gold at the 1984 Winter Olympics, said he and his wife "remain good friends".

Last night Boyzone star Mikey Graham, 37, became the latest celeb to get kicked off Dancing On Ice.

ICE QUEEN HAYLEY: Page 24



## Jack's back on the lash

JACK Tweed was snapped looking sozzled just a week after being released from prison on bail.

He spent all day drinking at a local bar before heading back to his mum's in Buckhurst Hill, Essex.

Tweed will go on trial next month for the alleged rape of a girl aged 19.

It emerged yesterday that the 22-year-old's late wife Jade Goody did not leave him a penny in her will, just her six-year-old VW Touareg car.

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